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POEMS

by the same author

STUDIES IN A DYING CULTURE

THE CRISIS IN PHYSICS

The Bodley Head

Com-05
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CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL

POEMS

LONDON
JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD

821.91
C37 P

First Published in 1939

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Christopher St. John Sprigg was born at Putney on October 20, 1907. After a childhood spent largely at East Hendred in the Berkshire Downs, he was sent to the Roman Catholic college of St. Benet's, Ealing (then Ealing Priory School). As a schoolboy, his interest both in poetry and in science was already well developed, but more noticeable at the time than either was his intellectual detachment, rather shocking to his school-fellows, and the marked intellectual dexterity with which he would argue on behalf of views totally different from his own.

He left school before he was fifteen to go straight to the *Yorkshire Observer*, of which his father was then literary editor; here he was cub reporter for a couple of years or so, and also did a good deal of novel reviewing. Coming to London he took up his first editorship, that of *British Malaya*. Two years later, he joined his brother in the founding of an Aeronautical publishing company, and worked very hard as editor of one of its technical periodicals, and at allied business interests in aeronautical advertising. A large amount of verse got itself written, and he became possessed of quite an assured technique, as readers may judge from the juvenilia contained in the present volume. He was extremely reticent about this verse. Another interest of this time, a considerable practical and theoretical knowledge of motor-cars, bore fruit in designs for an infinitely variable gear. These, when published in the *Automobile Engineer*, attracted

considerable attention, amongst others from Ricardo. On aerodynamics and other technical and scientific problems of aviation, he was of course well-informed, and he was also acquiring the foundations of his knowledge of physics. Of *The Crisis in Physics*, written in 1936, he held a much higher view than he allowed himself to take of most of his work.

From 1928 on his journalism began more to take the form of detective novels and popular books on aviation, especially after 1934, when he became a full-time freelance writer; in all he published eight thrillers and five aviation books. Batches of verse, written very fast, continued to come at widely-spaced intervals, each batch usually marked off from its predecessor by strong differences of style and technique. He would never consent to publish any of this verse, except for a very early poem which appeared in *The Dial*, and brought him appreciation in letters from the United States of America, Russia and nearer home. Experiments of later times included his first political poem, on the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, a number of short stories in the mode of Kafka, and a psycho-analytical novel *This My Hand*. This last was the first book he published under the pseudonym of Christopher Caudwell, which he reserved for his serious work, saying that he was afraid of spoiling his reputation as a writer of thrillers. This reversal of the usual procedure was very characteristic of his reserve, and was a decision made with complete gravity. His earnestness made any intellectual pretence impossible to him. His vein of exaggeration he kept for his humour, which was prominently developed, especially as against himself. His story of being thrown when riding in Windsor Park is typical: 'The horse arrived back wearing my wrist-watch.' Actually he was quite a fair rider, and the technique, like other techniques, fascinated him. His talk was as copious as his writing. His wide fund of fact

and theory, his courteous listening, and an extreme independence of character combined with strong personal reserve, make up outstanding memories of his personality, together with the Cheshire Cat grin which accompanied his shafts of humour, and contrasted so oddly with his extremely intellectual brow. In appearance, he was on the short side, dark, with brown eyes which bore an extremely sincere look. He did not marry but lived for many years on very amicable terms with his brother, both before and after the latter's marriage.

Marxism first began to absorb him towards the end of 1934, and developed with the usual rapidity of all his new interests. Previously his political views had been nil, and there is little doubt that it was as a poet that he regarded, and continued to regard himself.

During an experimental stay of two months during the late summer of 1935 at Porthleven, he came to the decision to live in the East end of London and study working-class conditions at first hand. Membership of the Communist Party came a few months later; he accepted with it the full round of routine tasks, illicit fly-posting, street-corner speaking, and selling *The Daily Worker*, and, later, secretaryship of the local branch. Most of these activities he disliked. With his usual thoroughness he went over to Paris to study the Popular Front movement, and began the task of learning Russian. Meanwhile he had every intention of continuing to find his own line through the intellectual problems before him, and consistently refused to be sidetracked into Head Party office or officialdom. He had also a real horror of being classed with the intellectuals of the Party, and gave them the widest possible berth, in just the same way that he had loathed and avoided all literary cliques.

As *Illusion and Reality* and *Studies in a Dying Culture* show, his deepest concern now lay in making the artist in him come to terms with the Marxist, a process in which neither

must be allowed the smallest shade of betrayal of integrity. These poems mark one attempt at this adjustment.

In December 1936 he decided to join the International Brigade, and two days later left for Spain, driving one of a convoy of lorries across France. Before his brief training ended, he was himself made a machine-gun instructor. Here was taken up the last of his editorships, that of the Battalion Wall newspaper. Meanwhile his brother in London was making unceasing attempts to persuade the leaders of the Communist Party that Chris would be of far more use to the Party as a writer than as a soldier. But none of Chris's books on Communism had then been published, and his independence and avoidance of party prominence proved to have been only too successful. Finally however his brother was able to obtain an advance set of proofs of *Illusion and Reality*, and when these had been read by a high party official, a cable was despatched recommending Chris's immediate recall to England. But it was too late. A few days earlier, on his first day in battle, he had been killed, covering the retreat of his section, in the Battle of Jarama River, February 12, 1937.

Of the poems in this volume, chosen posthumously at his request from a large body of manuscripts, the four *Juvenilia* poems and the translated Latin epitaph which stands as a forepiece were written between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. *The Art of Dying* he re-wrote many times from about 1926 onwards; the present and last version probably belongs to 1934. All the other poems were written early in 1935, or very close thereto, except *Orestes* which may have come a few months earlier. They represent his latest work in verse.

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EPITAPH

Unhappy men, who roam, on hope deferred
Relying, thinking not of painful death !
Here was Seleucos, great in mind and word,
Who his young prime enjoyed but for a breath.
In world-edge Spain, so far from Lesbian lands
He lies, a stranger on uncharted strands.

From the Latin

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POEMS

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THE HAIR

This hair. I took it first for tidiness
And then for love (for it is valueless)
And knotting it around my button said :
When you and I are dead
This hair may still be living. They'll not find
What Donne prospected, round the bare bone twined
This filament ; it may be anywhere.
A mouse may steal it to line his cold lair ;
Some bald apothecary full of hope
May stretch the strand across his microscope ;
Or a new turn of fashion's wheel, of which
We've seen so many, may make a girl stitch
The golden thread in her embroidery ;
Or simply this bright hair will simply be.

You never felt the loss. It quietly fell
Yet had I plucked it, would have made you yell,
And I too being torn from you, you'd weep,
But what I fear is, I'll slide from your keep
As other men have done, I know it well
And none will value what so easily fell
But some sly mouse or a short-sighted maid
Who hums and shades with hair her curious braid.

This was a part of you until it went
Which now doctors but rate as excrement ;
And in my vision, blessed because mine,
This trifle shone too, thin but present line

For nothing that was you was missed. That gone
This hair is all my hope can fatten on;
And even if I had as much of hair
As—when we embraced to the cool sheets bare—
Slipped from your brow to mine, it's not all you.
It is not nearly you. I'd take in lieu
Of you perhaps your letter, promise, heart
(You owe a heart). But I'll reject a part
For not a million parts can make the you
That my desires phantastically pursue.

Ah, when I'm bald, and love becomes disgust
(Your love will last up to that date I trust
But cannot know) you cannot imp on me
The years or hairs you now give easily.
No, for my girl at that not-distant date
You will unwillingly render to Fate
Each gift he asks back: hair, smooth skin, bright eyes,
The brave spring of your bosom, your curved thighs.
It's Beauty that falls from you; that I wind
Around my button, and I call to mind
Libations which the prudent pagans shed
Out of their plenty to the gods of dread,
For so this strand. But Time will strip you bare.
Me too. We'll shiver in the spiky air.
Ev'n flesh will go at last. Time will expose
This wig of flesh we wear from pate to toes
And pick our very bones bare. This first hair
Must for its draughty end our love prepare.
So clip and clip me! I can keep you warm
As long as any man can stave off harm;
At least I promise beauty will not fall
As this hair fell, unfought, unnoticed; all
Time plucks from you will send an exquisite
Pain through us both; I'll hold and hold you tight
And make him tug our flesh off. They will find

No hairy bracelet round your wristbone tied
For not until all moveables have gone
Shall I give up to Death your skeleton;
Not even then, for round your ribs will be
The bare arms of my own anatomy.

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HYMN TO PHILOSOPHY

I saw your figure in a Grecian mode:
A stripling with the quiet wings of death,
Touching with your long fingers a marble lyre.

I was impressed by your immortal age,
I was seduced by your adventurous strength,
I was relieved by your polite reserve.

A winged Idea down the rainbow sliding,
With steady steps treading the smoky air,
All ranks you visit, courteous swamp-foul.

The world's great engines pound asthmatically
Fed through Time's hoppers by recurrences
Man walks to man across a trembling swamp.

The scientific sportsman lifts his gun;
The second barrel blasts your blue pin-feathers
And you fall spluttering, a specific bird.

I see your stuffed breast and boot-button eyes
Preserved in cases for posterity
And lean on my umbrella thoughtfully.

I have caressed your sort, I must confess,
But give me beauty beauty that must end
And rots upon the taxidermist's hands.

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

When our full-bosomed ship drave through the Straits,
Our eyeballs frozen with continual watch,
A Diego said: 'In those chill-swirling waters
What monsters move, rolling beneath our keel!'

And at his words the hoarse bird-bearing night
Blazed with sharp fires, in rank seraphic ranged,
An orderly regression of bright eyes
That watched us. Voiceless company of comets . . .

'An angel stands by each, tending with art
His steady flame, his curled brows bent in thought,
Ingeminating some creative hymn,'
So said our captain, in his gallery kneeling.

'With menial breath each puffs his fervour up,
And these will watch us till we fetch the point
And, wearing ship, stand for the north again.
Look that you keep your hearts and speeches clean.'

'No,' muttered our arquebusier in his beard,
'A devil, shapen like a rocky hill,
Gorged with the larded flesh of heretics,
Spirts out these touch-flares from his creviced hide.'

Dawn came. Landing, priest-guarded, for fresh water
We found some naked manlings, foul as monkeys,
Who shivered, squatting in their holes of filth,
And cast opprobrious rubbish; till we charged.

Mere brutes they knelt, revering Christian giants.
A few we spitted on our swords; the rest
Our priests whipped till they owned the Christ; one girl
Ape-faced, but breasted well, our captain took.

WAS IT?

Was it mere manners
To practise that deft flexion of white wrists
That gave the ruffles their hypnotic grace?

Was it lasciviousness to send
The dishes in to those seductive tunes
Lest the words stumbled on the slippery floor?

Was it no more than repartee
To wind the question in neat folds
Then lay it bare with one uncoiling gesture?

If so, I was a hollow man
A decently-articulated doll,
I was no poet, plump with fire and blood

And you will hear a crash of falling glass
And find me (sawdust welling from the wound)
Stabbed through the bosom by the dirty truth.

Outside the nightingales (bemoaning me)
Tear their brown breasts; and the June roses
moult.
Open the window and throw down a coin.

DONNE'S REVERIE

Oh let your faces beaming in the smoke
Haunt me in death, when lungs and spirit choke
And, putting by with a fantastic hand
The friends who'd wind me in cerecloths, I stand
And contemplate around the sallow wrist
(Fall, memories fall!) the bright thin hairy twist,
Remembering how our heads the violets pressed
—A bosomy bank, love's softly-fragrant nest—
All a day through; palm grew then into palm
Cemented by a soft soul-sucking balm,
And the sun's ruddy face through curtains thrust
Looked enviously on our skeletal lust.

No matter. I have seen at the world's end
The weary planets from their cars descend
But I have never seen woman with soul.
Her flesh I count worth only as a goal
That quenches my desire; yet she's a queen
And in the dark her tressy crown is seen
Potable gold! To bed. The hunt is on
And we'll not bait until the deed is done,
For each such makes our span of living less;
Out to the brink our sweaty chargers press;
We meditate on what commodious way
Should love's bare godhead take a holiday.

I have wasted, lean-shanked, all hair and bone
That have the globed breasts of young women known.

They're dead: now praise the sweet nut-brown beldame
Weaving a sheet of beauty round her shame
And when she's dead, I squeeze the grapy earth
To praise her, sacred in it gave her birth
But then regretted having lost its name,
Recalled her, infamously gaining fame.

But I too wither; in the springs of hell
I smell the breath that I conceit too well.
Too well! Thus loneliness. Thus hell. Retreat.
The soul. Alone. No more. The last conceit.
Go deeper still! Let any woman rot,
The devil's snares, that are all that is not,
Ripe with the fragrance of immortal sheets,
In love's war tired with delightful defeats;
But swear they cheat you, courtier out-at-heels
Who thinks, smirks, hates, rhymes, rattles: yes and feels!

Dig to the roots! You have rehearsed your death
And scraped from poor vain glass your crusted breath.
A million texts, like white signposts at night,
Point point the way; on each rests your cracked sight.
But wait. Wait till these crowds of words have gone.
See, more and more. Death clatters. You have done.

THE STONES OF RUSKIN

A lion with grey hair and fragile hands
Ruskin, that lover of right-living art,
Towards the long end of a saintly life,
Forsaking the decorous slim-waisted Misses
Of a Greek-Oxfordised mythology
Stepped absent-mindedly into a boat
Which bore him to that Land of Women, sung
In Trobriand Island records of the gods.
These fell on him, libidinous and strong,
Abused him, roused him, stroked him, drove him
mad.

A little while his roars of pain were heard
Echoing from Rydal and the fell-grey steeps.
Then he was dead, champing the spring-fed grass,
His spirit at the bottom of the lake
Cold and disastrous of virginity.

We need not laugh, although all saw how pat
And apt it was this harpy Nemesis
Should catch the organ-voiced old maid of art.
Such foul enchantments wait for all us bards.
Some few in garrets starved or blue gulfs drowned
Are lucky ones, taken in youthful bloom.
Some in dress suits, protective mimicry,
Succeed in imitating business men
And the hawk Furies baffled pass them over.
The wisest stop their gambols and become
As ease stops up the operative glands

Sleek, ox-eyed, ruminative gelded beasts
Or at the worst drift off the stage of life
The slobber-lipped and palsied clowns of age.
All others come to curse the thing they blessed
And daub their chains with filth or scream at night,
Whipped by all the fat devils out of hell
Until their brother-madmen stop their mouths.

CLASSIC ENCOUNTER

Arrived upon the downs of asphodel
I walked towards the military quarter
To find the sunburnt ghosts of allied soldiers
Killed on the Chersonese.

I met a band of palefaced weary men
Got up in odd equipment. 'Hi,' I said
'Are you Gallipoli?'

And one, the leader, with a voice of gold,
Answered: 'No. Ours, Sir, was an older bungle.
We are Athenian hoplites who sat down
Before young Syracuse.

'Need I recount our too-much-memoired end?
The hesitancy of our General Staff,
The battle in the Harbour, where Hope fled
But we could not?

'Not our disgrace in that,' the leader added,
'But we are those proficient in the arts
Freed in return for the repeated verses
Of our Euripides.

'Those honeyed words did not soothe Cerberus'
(The leader grinned), 'For sulky Charon hire
Deficient, and by Rhadamanthos ruled
No mitigation.

‘And yet with men, born victims of their ears
The chorus of the weeping Troades
Prevailed to gain the freedom of our limbs
And waft us back to Athens.

‘Through every corridor of this old barracks
We wander without friends; not fallen or
Survivors in a military sense:
Hence our disgrace.’

He turned; and as the rank mists took them in
They chanted of the God to Whom men pray,
Whether He be Compulsion, or All-Fathering,
Or Fate and blind.

THE PROGRESS OF POETRY

I saw a Gardener with a watering can
Sprinkling dejectedly the heads of men
Buried up to their necks in the wet clay.

I saw a Bishop born in sober black
With a bewildered look on his small face
Being rocked in a cradle by a grey-haired woman.

I saw a man, with an air of painful duty
Binding his privates up with bunches of ribbon.
The woman who helped him was decently veiled in white.

I said to the Gardener: 'When I was a younger poet
At least my reference to death had some sonority.
I sang the danger and the deeps of love.

'Is the world poxy with a fresh disease?
Or is this a maggot I feel here, gnawing my breast
And wrinkling my five senses like a walnut's kernel?'

The Gardener answered: 'I am more vexed by the lichen
Upon my walls. I scraped it off with a spade.
As I did so I heard a very human scream.

'In evening's sacred cool, among my bushes
A Figure was wont to walk. I deemed it angel.
But look at the footprint. There's hair between the toes!'

ESSAY ON FREEWILL

Our deeds are broken horns of glass
Cast on the cold Atlantic shores
Where the indifferent breakers pass
Write your revenge on the white doors
The white huts of a leisured class.

And Newton in his spider's den
Forsaking the delights of love
Is broken broken City men
Haunt the deserted temple grove
And strike the hours upon Big Ben.

What's done is done is done is done
My father's father fat with sin
Will feel no flesh will see no sun.

Our vain regrets are dinosaurs
Infesting coalseams of the hours
Our hopes as fast as time can spin
Pressed up in calf-bound books like flowers.

Remember me when I am dead
The last thing that Napoleon said.

THE COAL

Lay it not out extravagantly
This red-hot coal we bear between our thighs.
Time's chastening airs make eunuch of our hopes;
Poor spendthrift perish not in bankruptcy.

Twice one is two is two is two
This farthing wisdom I have learned.
Turn the page over; note the sum,
And carry one, and carry one.

Blow into flame O Holy Ghost
The secret womb by thought made dull
To the toad's guarded brow entrust
The jewelled organ, fruitfulness.

I choose to spend it on my comrades; choose .
To lavish it on ignorant citizens.
I choose to warm with this hard-wrested gem
The conversations of the draughty streets.

Goddess of passionate chastity
No man can make a living thus.
The land will see our dwindlers starve
And lose its pregnant dividend.

The loins that tree-like strip them bare
Will perish of their poverty,
The plough hand-lacking rest and rust
And long-productive wells run dry.

Then damn all profit perish all increase
It is not love that reckons by the book.
Such warmth we own let life's cold pilgrims sup
Come! on the shivering margent of the tides

Let us haul hearty, knee to knee,
And pull the whey-faced shipwracked in,
To piece among their nakedness our clothes
And in our bosoms warm their bitterness.

TWENTY SONNETS OF WM. SMITH

I.

Come live with me and be my love.
Let us love's bourgeois pleasures prove
Where grasses' homely knitting spreads
Antimacassars for the hill's heads
Or landlady, shrill-rattled snake,
Glides through the aspidistran brake.
Let us be honest, flesh is flesh,
Yet there's a difference in the dish
If spiced with natural pleasantries
Or raw upon the slab life-size.
Where shall we fry our dish of love
And its more subtle pleasures prove?
 You know love is as we are able;
 The dish is done when brought to table.

II.

Before us all who worked this leaping oar
Contrived to drench the handle with perfume
But we in Love's hot galley load the grain
With natural sweat that bites the kissing palm.
Let words drip honey and drunk lovers pledge
Their raptures in the rose's cleanly breast,
Our own employ will have a rougher edge
In its own liquors by our lips confessed,

Shameless of whence it sucked its raw delights,
As sailors in their rough and tarry mode
Announce what grand extraordinary sights
Are to their nest of stinking cabins owed
Concealing not the thing by which they move,
Old body, faithful vessel of our love.

III.

If I obscure the flesh's endless shout
With patterns of a stale complexity
Admit me no excuse and no regret,
Traitor to you and traitor to our love.
If I betray our passion's simple gust
With flavourings of vaporous romance
May I be damned to burn in hell with lust
And find how these vague bubbles flee my lips;
But if I have exacerbated sense
To ape the soul's deep suction of delight,
If I have staggered with polyvalence
The fantasies that scorch our giddy eyes
And shocked the slippery habitudes of night
Count it as merit and a poet's right.

IV.

S to which mind ascribes the P of beauty!
Class of all classes patient to desire!
Let me pay learning and its conjuring tricks
The verbal homage of delirium,
And when we write that all-or-nothing *h*
In which we nothing do; or utterly
Expend our energy to glut our breasts
Let me profane my lips with algebra.
The ten co-ordinates of space achieved

The moments' miracle I sum as you
And tired of roses, eyes, superfluous stars
I praise you with the filthy rags of time,
With universes, galaxies, those tracts
Of death that wait to drink our limbs and acts.

V.

We are not what songs feign, my love my rose,
But beings full of blood and filthiness
And we must cram as desperately as beasts
The increment of our experience.
Each day is a concession to despair,
Each look, sigh, hope, delusion's armoury
And while Pygmalion smooths his frigid stone,
Insultingly betraying love's hot smell,
Let us squeeze with the furious haste of greed
The utmost brightness from our clipping limbs
Until the body's pulp distills its tears,
Salt, sweet, the tribute of our peach-fed love,
Pressed from this fatty garment we have on,
Joys foreign to the decent skeleton.

VI.

Lift the church and find the altar;
Lift the altar; find the stone:
Lift the stone and find the toad;
Lift the toad and find the rock.

I heaved the rock up, heaved like hell,
I pulled the rock up by the roots;
I pulled a church up by the hair:
Church and altar; stone and toad.

We found the occupation childish,
And while the organ, solemn, godlike,
Pealed out of the stained-glass windows
We fornicated to its tune.
Jones, more mystic, with a groan
Bashed his brains out on the stone.

VII.

Let the lovely birds and beasts
Explicate our common love;
How we lovers link our hopes
Faithfullest of living things.

Let the spider and his mate
That digestive passion can
Sing the praise of constancy
Each to each; it were a wonder.

Neither can the other part,
Each embracing, each embraced—
Never two so dear and common.
Now no fly can come between

No butterfly with violent wings
Flattering the sun and airs of spring
Win one's bright regard from other;
Never were such true-loves seen.

Here they lie; who knew love; could
 apply it;
If they grew bored, they could each
 other diet.
He made one dinner; she a little tried
To live without more; liked it not;
 and died.

VIII.

Though rulers fall and nations perish
Love's principality stands firm,
Its feet four-square upon the floor;
The floor upon the living rock.

Sweet fields of hay by yokels pressed
Or water buoying the cow whale
The earth indifferently sustains
On her basaltic carapace.

Religion fades; art is a dream,
Philosophy is bored to death;
But while the globe is sound at heart
Its beams will bear a lover's weight.

And gravity is with us yet
Let we forget, lest we forget.

IX.

The nightingale! it only needed that—
For this ex-reptile of an old-wives' tale
With her lost only asset maidenhead
To caterwaul into the sweaty night.
I have worshipped this animal I must admit,
Perched on many a thoughtful page, revealing
Lonely headlands, scraped by whispering clouds
And those great bumpers, filled with heady wine!
But now when I walk out to cool my head
Having tried to suck some sweetness from her breasts
And turn the greasy book of love anew,
My plucked nerves trembling with a stale delight
I hear this proclamation, rarely heard:
It's chance. You cannot know, gossiping bird!

X.

In your bran lists of love no firstling tilter
I lease your bed from many able wights
Who to the tourney have rehearsed my part
Better than I perhaps; I am not vain
Nor would I now reproach your openness
With any civil breach of guarantee.
The best is ripe; yours is no colic love
Nor rail I at those ghosts our converse warms,
And yet I rail, tenacious of my dream
In which I saw our only images
Like swan and shadow solitary drawn
Across the virgin belly of a lake,
 Restless in rest because my poet's heart
 Secretes a chasteness proper to my art.

XI.

What is your essence, how can you have purged
Your being of the ghosts that I evoked?
A million flowers uselessly tinged my brain
If your warm skin recalls no other scent.
Helen's advertisement was so much waste,
Your proper features can blot out her looks,
And ladies linking deftly chains of days
With which to lap the shins of hero-knights
Superfluous labour with their long white hands
Since your economy ensnared my soul.
Yes, you are you; you flaunt the naked fact
And mock my dream-soaked youth with all its waste.
 It is your trick or right and warns me well,
 Dream as I may, you will be what you are.

XII.

Tritons lift shells, the grapy bubbles pulp
Against the silver blades which, music-smitten,
Woo on the goddess's barge, and she, pearl-sphered,
Leans forward, gold hair on curds bosom dripping
And snuffs the crinkled incense. Doves descend
And nymphs elaborately girt with swags
Draw back the pleated clouds from a blue sea
Where a plump brig pursues a spouting whale.
A crowd waits. In that beach of sunbrowned limbs
Observe the curls, wine-spattered chins, great breasts
And now we see that Loves with coloured tapes
Haul up the vessel.

Get out, pay the fare,
And in we go. It is a cheap hotel;
The sheets are clean; and now they know us well.

XIII.

I could inventory all the offices
That make more palatable your skeleton;
The various over-valued orifices;
The sense-receptors love is moulded on.
I know what kiss conditions what reflex
To crook the leverage by which you move.
I hate the hot condition of my sex,
And yet, like any chanticleer, I love.
Is it the act alone which I adore,
Careless of whom so the delight is mine?
No, for the act alone offends me more,
A matter for that charlatan, the spine.
Mark me as one whom my low breeding mocks
Loving to loathe my love's cold paradox.

XIV.

My notes on love:—like an electric shock
Hated yet grasped and cannot now let go.
A wind impalpable that blows one way
All the mind's stiff and treelike qualities,
A snare of flesh in which the soul has tripped
And brought it on its face, the human way.
I am much skilled in derogation's art—
Will you hear more or answer with a kiss?
Best answer, nor indeed are you unskilled
In body's older *dialectice*
Where thesis and antithesis achieve
By friction a diviner synthesis.
How oft have we disputed! Till the skies
Paling, have bade us cease philosophize.

XV.

When I could bite my tongue out in desire
To have your body, local now to me,
You were a woman and your proper image
Unvarying on the black screen of night,
What are you now? A thigh, a smile, an odour:
A cloud of anecdotes and fed desires
Bubblingly unfolds inside my brain
To vex its vision with a monstrous beast.
There is no pure or intellectual you
But flesh usurps the brain's forsaken throne
And soaked in vision as in native lymph
Responds convulsively to sight of you:
Give us this day, O Lord, our daily bread.
The hungry flesh looks up and is not fed.

XVI.

Even the old Egyptians had more tact
Than you, complaining I was cold to touch
Whom winter winds had battered as I crept
Through lonely streets to sneak up draughty stairs.
Be still, be still! The natural warmth we own
Endlessly monotonously stoked
And guarded as we can from puffing death
Suffices for a while to kiss and cling
But this same hand you warmed between our breasts
Consumes the marrow of my roaring bones
And spite of all the sheets we wrapped us in
Our furnaced hearts will burn themselves to death,
And we'll not try, we two, when we are dead
Like ignorant ghosts, to warm ourselves in bed.

XVII.

If I have loved you mainly with my brain
Until it sizzled in its pan like milk
Reproach me not; I cannot hope to prove
My genuine passion with prodigious feats
That bawds and bards might celebrate in sheets.
You know the thing I am; then how I love
Mark the outrageous froth upon my lips
And the hoarse fancies of delirium.
The brain that sways me, in no rite revered,
You have inflamed, distended, pumped with blood.
Yes, you have heard these lips botch genteel verse,
The comfortable murmur of delight
Expect it not yourself; nor from them ask
More than the slobber of love's prentice task.

XVIII.

In Nature's factory not laggard workers
We've yet produced no trophy of our skill
And she may well dismiss us both as shirkers
Barren by no misfortune but ill-will.
Yet she approves the ruby's fruitless splendour
And wastes on hairy nostrils her perfume:
Let her, so spendthrift, be to lovers tender
And take these songs as produce of your womb;
Time will destroy them but they'll dance as long
As coloured flies or the short hopes of spring
And let her know, we shall not do her wrong,
But every shift we work on, I shall sing,
Wherefore, industrious labourer, I write
While the day's light holds, and still work at night.

XIX.

If I have shocked you that dislikes to hear
The thing named you so excellently do
Forgive me love, for I am fighting foes
You know not, proud in your unmortgaged flesh.
The body of my song is too corrupt,
Foul with the staleness of great athletes' beds,
I could not trick her out in virgin clothes
To pass as honest among worldly men,
And if I have bewhored her to the skies
Accept it not insultingly in me
That sucked fresh vigour from your tender lips
And the reviving greenness of your breasts.
We have been honest and song's naked sight
Now promises unpalated delight

XX.

In which we shall have earned the rose the rose
Whose petals crumpled by a thousand thighs
Were virgin and unfingered once God knows
Then worth the scented burthen of our sighs.
I have been niggard of enjoying spring
But yet the time must come when a ripe Muse
May hear the name pronounced without a grin
And automatic twitching of her hams.
Yes, even the wood's great pimp the nightingale
In the full flood of meretitious song
Set on by his unholy bawd the moon
May be permitted to observe our love
And sing of it, no more a leering foe,
As once he used, two thousand years ago.

THE ART OF DYING (*An Elegy*)

Is it not time to study how to die
Against the time Death's mystery we ply
Once Life's poor chided journeymen—that state
In which we shall endure longer than Fate
And still but in the raw novitiate be
When Nature's Master writes his last decree,
When by Time's death freed from his annual cess
Full burgesses, we enter nothingness?

Old Seneca has much rehearsed his death
And finding to expel his quiet breath
Is no more pain to him than to inspire it,
Reasons to breathe life out when death require it
No worse than breathing in life with a cry,
The harsh experience of our infancy;
Suspects he was enamoured of the womb
As now of life (then feared as now the tomb)
Proposing logically once dead to hate
As much the prospect of a further state.
So revellers will outwatch the starry skies
And once recumbent are as loth to rise.

Certain it is, those who would much skilled be
In death's still unexplored philosophy
And wormy dialectic, know it best
To have some formulas to fence one's breast
Against hope's trespass; sharp dilemmas make.

Like him, wit's saint, whom death came near to break,
Whose spirit was a dirty thundercloud
Releasing poetry, to passion vowed
Then God (both incarnations of the shroud)
We ripe some comfort in the grapes which dress
Not vine, but grave-yards, make death's hard feet press
A mithradatē from his burial vats
To poison and cure too. The burning ghats
In whose smoke body imitates its breath,
Will thus instruct you in the art of death,
How, public hermits, the great dead put by
The chafe of chains, the cares of liberty,
And for perdition count the world well lost,
That most care-free untrammelled thing, a ghost.
Such doctors, expert in the schools' abuse,
Twist life's pert pupil-cherubs in a noose:
If you still sport youth's clear rebellious rose
When the grave's antique scissors on you close
Reflect you have some forty gustless years
Of wambling sorrow, age's easy tears,
Scaped by this stratagem. If you are come
To bed or crutch when death inverts his thumb
Well, the fool clothes in shrouds and lets you lie
In his great hostel in your bankruptcy.
If you are humble, think that over it
Rude men will tramp, and on your ashes spit;
If you are one whom calm Philosophy
Taught men all equal, then, so here they'll be;
If you are proud, think, ere that second birth
You now would own, but then will be the earth.

Well, you are human and you have in dreams
Seen a strange blossom which no earth's gross streams
Could diet; in the corridors of sleep
You met a spirit, felt the midnight weep
Around you both, such currents did both move

As it is profanation to call Love;
You have loved unreasonably; the moon was queen
And told Rapunzel from her tower to lean
And loose her hair into the garden close:
The nightingale would chatter to the rose
Of desperate fables, hopes as old as death
Which, as their age imports, exchange for breath,
Your breath, and gladly given, but sleep fled,
And you wakened in your sordid bed.
But death is endless sleep, so when you die
With these short hopes you'll live eternally:
If this you doubt at least certain remain
This kind of thing will not vex you again,
No want perplex more the exhausted brain.

New Senecals esteem the self-pierced heart
The coarsest craftsman in the dying art
Where all things walk in shadow, fly extremes,
Reciprocate like tides and wind like streams.
They reason, since death magnet is of life
Which men avoid by constant strife,
Since fruit and water always downwards tend
And when birds rest their pinions they descend,
None should advance their death. Though life's a maze
None overlong in its labyrinth strays.
There are a million fatal figures; chance
Conspires with Time always to change the dance
And he who makes his exit ere his cue
May be reborn to act his piece anew,
Or wander restless while his fellows lie
Their good fight fought, at length allowed to die.

Deceiving looks; the angels that we paint
Are often less ethereal than a saint
Or even than a youth of vulgar clay
But then these have not such bright minds as they

Whose heart-strings are of flame, who bear within
A small piece of the heaven where they've been;
And let our poppy tell you that the rose
Has never made a corpse's eyes uncloze,
That to this patron saint of living, prayers
Are useless, roses on a grave are jeers,
But let one living seek *her* aid and part
His lips, so she may throne within his heart
And in an hour or two that Roman peace
Will be established where rebellions cease.
This flower is sacred to death's anchorite
Who meditates death's office every night
And when the natural poppy of the brain
Bids him compose himself for sleep again
And up the stairs the smoky candles pass
The chamber-ritual serves as his Black Mass.
Thus goes the meditation—when I slide
Day's garments off and lay them all aside
I think that flesh which fits me like a glove
Must all be slipped off at the last remove.
Then when I lie in bed and draw about
The flaxen webs to keep the sharp cold out
I see the day when they will wash my skin
And search for a white cloth to wrap me in
Trusting that as the angels walk in white
Their friend to such fair garments will have right;
But I'll not pray or hope my shroud will be
Fit token of my final innocence,
Old-childhood; for I hold it far from fair,
Seeing the dirty breezes man must dare,
The various rubbish that the world's winds sift,
He should quit life with an unsullied shift.
No, what I think a corpse's jacket shows
Is, bitter cold's the world to which he goes,
And that thin sheet may shield the soul at first
A little from the soil's amorous thirst

Until she's used to death's austerity
And is more practised simply not to be.

And then put out the light! Never will sleep
Come when the lights their sharp distraction keep,
Nor will your wished-for peace delight the mind
Until Life's candle gutters in the wind.
It's dark, as you'll be on your bed of death,
Waiting for peace to rule your rebel breath
And give the soul her quittance. There are those
Who feel before sleep's fingers round them close
A stifling heaviness, a mountain weight
That sits upon the snoring mind like fate:
Then think of the death-pangs you must endure
Before your peace of mind's at last secure,
Think of the weight of soil that men will heap
Upon your body lest you wake from sleep.

Murmur your childhood's prayers under your breath
But your God's name replace by that of death,
For death the greatest of salvations is
And none has proved more permanent than this.
Solomon in the end a heathen turned
But not the ficklest Christian ever burned.
Ev'n God they say his Might in flesh once cased
And with a death his deity disgraced
But that was to save man while living, plain
Enough it is that the attempt was vain.
You still can save yourself: the final doom
Of the To-morrow that must always come;
Revenge; ingratitude; remorse; hate; all
The misdemeanours that men living call.
Yes, let a score of Gods die for you, you
Can do as much, can die for yourself too
And drag perfection level with your head
(For what's perfection except to be dead,

Life's largest and unalterable sum,
Soul's last eternal equilibrium?)
Take the old road; it climbs a steady slope
To the hill's brow, then leaves the rest to hope.
The last time speaking, for the last time fed,
Start, wrap your cloak about your hoary head
And, loosening the clasping hands from round you,
glide
Out into the deserted countryside.
Just for this trifling distance you must go
Companionless, a stoic heel-and-toe,
But do not fear, since millions have passed
This way (which everyone must tread at last)
Without complaint, and like the punctual host
Of heaven gleams each cold and distant ghost
Alone in the vast ether; in our sight
Some trepidations foreign to pure light
May make them shudder, but in truth all are
Content and constant as the Polar Star
There, where the sea from useless labour rests
And hangs unmoving at the heaven's breasts.

FOUR JUVENILIA

i. ON 'A PUBLIC SCHOOL ANTHOLOGY'

Are *these* the lays of the young Lord of Day?
If sing you must, why not in your own tongue
Music you surely knew—the summer sun
In glory dying past the playing fields
While the wet grass breathes its keen evening smell
On the cool breezes; the unvext clear pool
That takes the body like Sleep's wings; the pit
And breasted tape; and all those quiet hours
In some lush meadow with a friend and book
Till twilight was felt crouched in the deep vales
Then walked the hills. And slowly we returned
Tired; and each lonely lad heard the old call
Of Honour racing with the wind of Death.
Could you forget so easily, or not know,
That you should ape in sickly predecease
Our own just-dying song; that you should strive
To imp your feathers on our broken wings?
And must you speak in feigned tones ever to tell
Of how there smote your suddenly-dreamy eyes
The gleam of Aphrodite's brilliant flesh,
Uncaved from her shell which lay beneath all storm,
Rising; gold hair blown round her blue-veined breasts
On the dark seas, to hide her girdle's glint.

ii. ON A DEAD CAT

Your proud-held head's forever laid
On earth, in death, not sleep. You're made
Such sight as you would have disdained—
A matted carcase, gravel-stained.
No more, life-still, on days death-still,
You'll bask and drowse upon the sill,
Or stroke yourself against my chair
With spread-out paws and tail in air,
Or, purring, press your soft round head
Into my palm; for you are dead.

Good-bye! Ere I could come, disease
Conquered at last beneath your trees,
You, who affected pride of race
And warmth; but most unfailing grace
In sleep; night-hunting through the woods;
And the sea-changes of your moods.

iii. IN THE AEGEAN

We passed that day on the Aegean deep,
Those lovely children of the Cyclades,
And thought of all the gracious forms that sleep,
Prisoned in rock, beside those tuneful seas,
Never to be released ! for in the dust
The enchanted chisels of Phidias rust.

iv. ON DRYDEN

He made the eyes of Logic glow,
His curse anticipated Fate.
His serene justice to his foe
Adds to the list of virtues, hate.

ORESTES

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ORESTES

APOLLO

I God unveiling from the clouds my glory
Consent to wait in this consulting room
From simple habit. When the clockwork ticks,
Caught up in the machinery of verse,
I automatically descend. The sinners
No longer clasp in suppliance my bare shins
But seated on a chair (turned to the light)
Cling to the horns of an impressive desk
On which an Austrian wizard combs his beard,
Yet as I couched upon a chilly cloud
A cry of suppliance rose—or snuffle rather—
Imploring for its aid old-fashioned gods.
I rose and dressed, shot down the lift of heaven,
And here I am. The air was thick with fog;
It scarcely cleared at my terrific nod;
My hyacinthine locks are out of curl.
No matter! for the lovely groves are shorn
And the clear lustral brooks run dry, run dry
Or bear their load of sewage to the sea.
As I came in I saw a queue of suppliants;
The wizard warned me that my sacred limbs
Might rouse emotions foreign to his goal
In these distressed young females. Let it be.
I must display my fine development;
A god must keep the attributes of godhead
And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.

So here we are, and in this temple wait.

THE WATCHMAN

Temple he calls it. That's the best I've heard !
It's the consulting-room of Dr. Tape.

APOLLO

Who is this fellow with the prosing style?

THE WATCHMAN

I saw the boy-scouts' beacon start its run
And how its fiery message crisped and curled
Upon the broad chins of the solemn hills
Until night's razor shaved the glad news off.

APOLLO

Ah that sounds more familiar ! Carry on !

THE WATCHMAN

Three thousand years ago I saw that light
And saw the sharp face of the king my lord
Caught like a mad bull in that wicked net,
Nor, though three thousand more pass, can forget.
I cannot learn the wisdom of that death
For I am dead and I forget the rest. . . .

Now my new thoughts march on, and almost seem
The roted speech of a dim stage-player
Whose words are what the dramatists confer.
Once I could damn straight out the gods on high
But now the gods are subject till they die
To God knows what; the wheel of living gleams
And new mutations upset old *régimes*—

APOLLO

I know ! You're that old idler on the roof
Who saw the whole thing done—the crime itself!

THE WATCHMAN

—Her mind a hell she stood there at the gate
And watched her husband pass into his fate.
In hell she stands now; waits to do the deed
Of which what earthly action was the seed?
The death at Aulis?—the young girl who saw
The sober fillet of the priest with awe
Then screamed, as sharp across her tight-stretched throat
Crawled that cold edge to the kine's death devote?
Or farther back? To unaccustomed meat——

APOLLO

You may well ask! Desist my friend I pray.
You hardly know what metaphysics is,
Much less the venomed problem that you pose.
We gods are not concerned with who struck first
But who struck whom. Why do you look around?

THE WATCHMAN

Your voice, Sir, always had a special power
And now it sounds with its familiar charm
Surely it will arouse the nightingales?
Yes, here they come, dressed in their black tailcoats,
White-bowed and rubicund, with polished hair;
Fiddle to chin or baton in the hands
And, bowing to the god once, twice, begin:—

THE NIGHTINGALES

The City is fallen! fallen!
Dead are the bright-greaved heroes,
Dead are the besieged, the attackers.
Preserved in earthenware
The ashes of high-born soldiers
Are clasped to shadowy bosoms.
Who tramps in the meadows of fables

To bring back the dead to the dead?
To those phantastic sweethearts
Who found War a money-lender
Extorting his cent per cent
For every golden warrior?

A Fury perched on this house
Snuffing the sweat of sorrow
And the deflowered Cassandra
Nipped in the Python's coils
Screamed as the knife struck inwards.
Screamed. Ah God, we heard her!
O cursed unhappy Atridae
Come not this cold night seeking
To find why you lived and suffered!
You prisoners of Shadows!

'Not we; dream rapes our City
Come in array to save us.'

Not enough that our lovely
Voice, to the stars arising
Sings while the rose is dumb?
Not that our notes are golden
And mirrored in song's fountains
Even pain has beauty?
No more knock at the threshold
With boneless beating hands
To rouse a House of Shadows.
Our song eludes the darkness
In memory persisting.
You like the rose are tongueless.

APOLLO

All good advice and, taken thrice a day
Would cure an obstinate ailment. Men are men

And when I was an oracle I found
That diet and hard exercise prescribed
Soon cost me fame and money. Men want more:
To cast a dagger at the frowning sky
Or fish the virgin oyster from its bed
And broil its glittering pearls in pigeon's milk.

THE WATCHMAN

It's as you please, Sir. You can call the tune.
Strike up, you fellows there, and try again.

THE NIGHTINGALES

Out of the loins of Time: earth forming; life flooding;
mind blowing:

Spirited delight.

The living juice of it crusts on the thighs of the sea,
And out of sea's caverns risen, Venus, wet from the womb,
Decks it with Night.

On the sky's base it hangs; crowns burning, flowers
blooming; beasts barking;

A wasps' nest of stars;

And we hear their orderly tramp as they stamp on our
heads;

And the causeway of bodies works and ferments, crushed
with the beat

Of their hooves, of their cars.

Even the gods hear the clatter; thrones shaking; robes
shredding; crowns bending

They slide from the sky,

And the shepherd's staff points at these flaming comets
with awe;

They have fallen before the cohorts of invisible law;

Their hulks earth-stranded lie.

All things are born and die. Pears ripe; maids marry;
stars drop.

All is law's slave.

Why should we struggle or fret? Let us beat the ground
with our feet.

Let us mate and rear children; grow beards, pass laws,
and forget,

Go quiet to the grave!

THE WATCHMAN

That was good stuff, straight from the leader page.
I'd give a pound to have my young ones hear it.
That was the way my mother brought me up.

APOLLO

I'll make no doubt she prosed on like yourself.
You've caught the trick nodding by your coke-bucket.
Be careful or your old beard will catch fire!
But this won't do. I was a god of fashion
And never stood *démodé* devotees.
No thirsty tongues would lick this dry stuff up:
They long to slap the fat sun's rosy cheeks
Or foxtrot with a whale in Reykjavik
Where the winds howl from Arctic loneliness.

THE WATCHMAN

God bless my soul! Are you in earnest, Sir?
Well, you have heard him, friends. So do your best!

THE NIGHTINGALES

I have been unfamiliar with the best;
I have seen the sirens nodding each to each
And Aphrodite in her woollen vest
Unloose her girdle to one man alone.
I have been blown

By eager storms beneath most monstrous wrecks
While beauty puffed off the old cliffs like hair
Making a net to catch the sunset in.

Ohe! Ohe!

Entrechat quatre! Entrechat six!

Entrechat! Pirouette!

Entrechat? Tour en l'air!

So goes the measure.

So leaps my treasure.

Pas de deux! Pas de seul!

Higher and higher,

Into the fire

And burned to a cinder.

They took it and broke it and gave each to each

And every day in memory of me

Cause it to be performed at all high altars

Or every pious quorum of eleven—

We know the twelfth and how his bowels gushed out

Or else he hanged him in a potter's field,

For I forget the story

As I grew old and sere

That have the fair breasts of young women known

What time they came to seek me on tip-toe;

But now I chase them down the sordid alleys

With the blue bloodhounds baying on my heels.

It is a fond, most melancholy story

And I could sit on the damp ground all day

But reasons of hygiene forbid me this.

But I love Mamie

And she loves me.

Most kissable

Most kissable

Girl you could see!

And so they set him nodding on the stage,
A marionette of sixty who flew round
Jerked by the strings of dancing and strong drink
While all the boys and maidens gathered there
And urged him on the weary paths of sin.
Are we not poxy? Or so unrepressed
That our delivered brains have strewn the floor
And now we dance on them with printless toe?

But hist! A faun,
And after him
A score or more
Of Attic virgins,
Fair frieze enwrought
In Oxford attitudes!
Arms bent; legs prinked;
Chins back; curled wigs;
White drapery and toes.

Was it for this that Elgin Athens sacked
And the Turk hurled about great cannon balls
And Fate choked Isadora with a scarf?
These drowned sea-maidens with their weedy hair
And whelks upon the eyes are rotting ghosts
Drifting about the quiet yards of dream.
I have no love for them, no, not for one.
I count it most unpleasant to be struck
As I grope round, by a bone-slimy hand
The quintain of my unhandy way with corpses.

Let me live quietly and with care consider
Whether it was that after all I did err,
Till metamorphic autumn fire my brains
And then I settle down. Rheumatic pains
A while will give me substance for complaint
And then I pass, a poor discarded saint

Into the quietness of the famous grave
About which I much information have.

While negro fiddlers
To cheap jazz bobbing
Roll their eyes :
Thump! Thump! Thumpah!
Thump! Thump! Thumpah!
Thump! Thump! Thumpah!
Beat the ground,
Shake the hips,
Slap the breast.
Thump! Thump! Thumpah!
Thump! Thump! Thumpah!

No matter ! Peace, O maggot of the brains
And all barbaric embryos of thought
That lord it in the soft subconscious of black space.
Nigger or Mongol or what chance may bring
To the opprobrious *Homo sapiens*
Listen ! we have the sick with us to-night
So let us pray.
Where that great angel of the stethoscope
Looks westward ; ay, look well and puff him on
What pale prescription out of the fat shades
May hale him, messenger of manic dream.
A little while to us the keys are given
And the bronze canons of dramatic art
To blast the evil out of these bloat souls
While light persists. Let all love's sailors tossed
This night upon a stormy pillow ; all
Murderers with thrawn necks and evil eyes ;
All pale adulterers perverting clean beds
And every lax-bowelled dreamer torn with ruth
Pray with us ;
And O ye Furies spare the hapless youth !

I have in my sheer pity writ this page
(The artist speaks)
I have observed the suffering in their eyes.
Poor children! I will chafe their frozen hands
And give them of my knowledge hardly won
By long enjoyment of my mature life
(You may rely on my entire discretion
To go off-stage when I blow out my brains).
The adventitious pity beauty brings
Shall be the cobweb clapped on this heart's cut.
Most kind, most noble honourable lords,
Of vast creation's dunghill cocks and kings,
Vouchsafe to hear our prayer, and bend your eyes
To observe a little fable, pastoral
And artless, fit for children, yet has wit.
Amen!

THE WATCHMAN

They call that singing? No, no, no, no, no!

APOLLO

Excellent! really excellent, little birds!
A God, I weep; and heavenly saline flows
At such pathetic music. Come, play on—
But soft, here is my suppliant! And late!
Why are you late? Being a god, myself
Answers the question, that a traffic block
Delayed you. And the traffic of your fear?
Ah my young friend, a wiser man than you
Remarked that care clung to one's horse's rump—
New skies the exile finds but his old soul.

But he ignores me. Sniffs at your coke-bucket,
Ignores you too. These modern youths are blind
To the old generations of the gods
Yet still, by his sick eye and lagging tread
He hears the furies snuffling at his tail.

ORESTES

And when the doctor presses down my tongue
I shall repeat the accustomed formula—

Ar-r; and then he asks *How are our motions?*

I see . . . And have you any business worries?

Dr, I stabbed my mother in the breast.

Her head rolled forward. Sister held it back

And the blood dripping from her on the floor

Made a small pool. My father on all fours,

A shade but greedy, licked the fluid up

Until we basted him across the pate:

‘Be off! Papa! We’ve done the proper thing
By you, and you’ll not fatten on her blood
To come to earth again. Shoo! both you shades
And fight it out in earth’s sulphuric womb.’

Then Sister, letting go the hair, sat down
And wiped her hands. ‘Well, that’s a dirty job
But finished. We have done our duty, dear.
God, how she squealed! A pig would be more quiet,
But mother always was so sentimental.’

I answered: ‘Do you hear a sort of noise?’
‘A sort of noise?’

‘Yes, a kind of sniffing?’
‘Orestes, have you had a drop too much?
Not that I blame you!’

‘No, I’ve had no drink;
But I can hear a curious doglike snarling.’

Later of course they came, snake-haired, thin-dugged
And squawking, sitting on my bed all night
Or perched behind my chair with clapping wings.
I drove to Wick at 60 m.p.h.
And found them curled beneath the tonneau cover
And when I flew to Moscow on the Moth
They hung head-downwards from the fuselage.
I gave up bathing in the South of France
Seeing them crawling in the blue profound

Below me, spitting soft bubbles at my eyes.
Tape still remains: the hope of parricides
And only bulwark of incestuous love.
I will sit down and wait till he comes back.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Guess who it is, Orestes, a surprise!

ORESTES

Electra! Take your fingers off my eyes!
I thought it was the Furies. You made me jump.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Wrong! It's me!

ORESTES

Mother! But you are dead.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes, dead and damned, my boy; and so are you.

ORESTES

True. I forgot that I was dead and doomed.
They left me dead in Athens so long ago
And now I walk this draughty interspace,
A phantom with the easy ways of speech.

CLYTEMNESTRA

And I am doubly dead: once, killed by you:
Twice, left for dead in Athens long ago.

ORESTES

But Sophocles gave me a sweet old age . . .

THE WATCHMAN

Then what the devil are you whining for?

ORESTES

Because I only did it in a dream
They cannot punish or forgive my sin.
Nor can I die; for I too am a dream.
I cannot cut my throat or lose my wits
Or swallow arsenic or found a Church.
I soothed my jangled nerves in days gone by
With bellowing thunder into Jove's vast ear
Or serenading with melodious voice
The pity-dropping balconies of Heaven.
Nowadays I can only sit and whine.

CLYTEMNESTRA

And waste our time! Apollo, Lord of song
And Arbiter of life, you know the rules!
Although this suppliant clasps your pedestal
Regard a mother's immemorial rights.

ORESTES

Let me with lustral water lave me clean!

APOLLO

Alas my friend, it's full of chemicals
And runs beneath us with the mains and gas.
The lady's right. The Furies are unpleasant
Granted. It's their *métier*. They exist;
There were no Furies until man was born,
You and your kidney have created them.
So take them as they come. And here they come.

THE WATCHMAN

God bless my soul, what unpleasant old hags.
No wonder the poor nightingales flew off.

THE FURIES

There was an old man of the Nile
Who lived in colossal style.

But he lived so long
His liver went wrong
And he died of a surfeit of bile.

There was an old man of Cathay
Who just lived for day after day.

When they asked him, 'Why
Don't you do or die?'
He answered, 'I like my own way.'

There was a young man of the West
Whose wardrobe fell on his chest

And rather than ask
For help in a task
He gnawed his heart out of his breast.

We can report remarkable behaviour
Of every sainted race in every age.
We have observed in detail Christ's psychosis
And the neurotic fits of Socrates.
We've watched the obsession of each civilization
Gather in some great abscess of a city
And burst at last in pale grey floods of plague
Or the vermilion hæmorrhage of war.

We have published a monograph on trophallaxis
Exhibiting the human parasite:
Its sexual habits and autophagy,
Its aberrance, self-mutilation, fits.
We are proudest of our patented man-poison
Which will not make a stench. It's guaranteed.
It is secreted in the pest's intestines.
He drinks; it swells; he crawls away and dies

Or gouges out his gaster with his nails
If he belongs to the neurotic whites.
And God himself has signed a testimonial
To its effect in Europe's happy home
Which was infested with the lesser Nordic.
A minute application was enough:
They dashed out to the nearest open space
To beat and bung each other for four years.

God recommends another application
But we incline far more to *laissez-faire*.
There is a wandering mania in the eyes
That shows us the survivors are diseased.
Yes, we submit, this slow degeneration
With their sterility, will do the trick.
Then we can settle with the yellow species
And the more vigorous and larger black.

Orestes has a certain native toughness.
He knows his science, poetry, and Freud;
He has his dreams of economic bliss;
He cleans his teeth; his conscience; and his bowels.
But we shall get him for his brain breeds worms.
Its very warmth and vigour will destroy him.
He'd be O.K. if he had had no parents
And could refrain from eating tasteful food
Or the sly bliss of talk or reproduction
But as it is, we fear that he must go.

Three thousand years upon the plank of death
He's tottered dangerously but kept his grip;
Now he's unsafer than he ever was
Because he's seen at last what lies below him.
Christ told him God had hung a net down there;
Muhammed mentioned magnets in his toes;
Huxley suggested gravity was with him;
But now he knows one slip will break his neck.

Each night I have descended into hell
Which is like Brighton on a larger scale.
I found the passionate heat intolerable
But this resort is famous for its sun.

I have been that disgusting androgyne
Which every human soul bears in its breast
And wandering in the meadows of perversion
Was shocked to meet a Bishop and a dean,
Professors, and two Secretaries of State.
The Devil waits for all of us in dream
And our Orestes hardly dares to sleep.
He knows the dangers of that haunted deep
Where the full-bosomed Mermaid twangs her harp
Strung with the horny guts of mariners :

‘Down, down !
Come away, come away
Children dear !
Don’t be afraid,
Here you may hate
Father or mother,
Kill your brother.
Spit on this one ;
Wound the other.
Down in my dark,
Down in my cosy,
Down in my breast !
Come away, come away,
Children dear !
All for your pleasure,
All for delight,
Wishing is dreaming,
Dreaming is having,
Having dreaming,
Dreaming die !’

Which wiser ants condemn and as the juice
Spurts from their abdomens, bless Him Who sits.)

Thus the world wags; and every night to hell
Where your sincerest wish is gratified
(And so is hell) and every morn to earth
Gladly return, and every night to hell
As glad go back, Orestes! and like hounds
We snuffle at your heels to keep you spry
Until you cough blood, fall between two stools
And fly apart in some preposterous mania,
Torn by the rival claims of nonsense dreams
Which none on earth can satisfy at once.

APOLLO

May I felicitate you, my dear ladies?
I'm dumbfounded by your modernity.

ORESTES

Supposing I stand up to you, you hags
And you too, Mother! Knowing you are dreams,
Offer my cheeks to your infernal nails
And say: 'Go, do your worst. You are pure shades
Without a vote or household! You are dreams
And if you frighten me I shall awake!'

APOLLO

You can of course do that.

THE FURIES

He can't!

CLYTEMNESTRA

He daren't

APOLLO

He can. But if he dare, then you and I
And this prim fabric of reflective art
Will at once crumble into dusty words.

ORESTES

And I?

APOLLO

And you'll be less. A fag-end thrown
Contemptuously upon earth's foul floor
Whom God's angelic chars disdain to salve.

THE FURIES

He pales!

CLYTEMNESTRA

He'd see me dead but not himself!

THE FURIES

(Semi-Chorus I.)

We've got him. He's afraid of suicide.

(Semi-Chorus II.)

Liven him with a whiff of poison gas!

(Semi-Chorus I.)

Stir the mixture
Boil and bake;
Triturate!
Masticate!
Pound and filter
For his sake!

(Semi-Chorus II.)

Many a long-haired parasite
In its pale and fungoid sleep,

Many a witch-faced eyeless monster
Trawl-delivered from the deep.

(Semi-Chorus I.)

Stir a wounded pastry godling
And a harlot's leprous sap
In a cupful of dementia
From the spine's diseased tap.

(Semi-Chorus II.)

A pinch of scurf, a cancer cell,
An old physogastrous ant.
Shake up the lickerish concoction
And, ye humorous ghosts, avaunt !

CHORUS

Seven times we turn about
Obedient to Planck's equation.
Nature's secrets he may touch
Now ; but not salvation.

ORESTES

Yes, I'll endure. In hell, but I'll endure.
No doubt some residue of tougher salts
Will last the flames out. In the cold earth's autumn
Ripeness, with promise of increase, may come
And touch these chalky joints with hope. Survive
Orestes, with the extent of certitude
That satisfies the agriculturist
Or the bleak wizard, waiting until rain
Anatomizes the fat body, bares
The white and knobbled chassis of the flesh.

THE FURIES

You flatter yourself, boy ! How can you boast
Of your decision to go on with life?

It's no decision. Here in black and white
The stage directions state you go on living
And as the script requires, so you perform.

ORESTES

I do not claim the merit but the fact—
That I endure, that I attain at last
What profit to endurance may accrue.

APOLLO

Well, I for one cannot endure this place
And I must go. Already on my skin
These human sorrows crust in rancid sweat
Requiring the cool hands of flower-fed nymphs
Smudged with embrosia, to ease me of it.

I think I am a reasonable god
And therefore I suggest a compromise.
You, young Orestes, make a sacrifice
To the maternal *manes*, and what else
My priest requires in ritual—and pay.
You, Clytemnestra, drop your present *rôle*
And play the tame perhaps but restful part
Of martyred and forgiving wife and mother
(No questions asked of Agamemnon's death).
And you, dear ladies, shall receive a church
Or theatre or chair in this fair prospect
Where the Thames gushes on the tuneful mud
And by the glittering tramlines lamp-posts rise
Spreading their pale corollas of slow light
And many a wireless set, its small mate wooing
Sings ardent, while at evening's downfall comes
Night, like a heaven-kissing cloud to bless
The peering cheeks with multi-coloured sheen
Of signs or signals; and hot water flows
Constant, the generous dower of the gods

So morn returns ; but not to me return
These songs and flashings, for the cold of heights
Enfolds me, borne afar upon the clouds
In the wing-boastful company of gulls
Sucking vain winds ; while to your palates come
Daily roast offerings ; fruits to please your eyes ;
Flowers in profusion ; Ocean's showers of fish ;
Blue halls of high-piled meat ; and diamonds
As gross as those with which the Tatar Khans
Pelt slaves in anger ; and eternal gold
Sleeping in the old caves of Parliament,
Tun after tun, drowsier than the plump girths
Tapped cautiously by fabulous Beefeaters
Chumbling the scarlet livery of age—

CLYTEMNESTRA

Urged by my proper malice, I refuse.

THE FURIES

And we refuse, for naught our palates pleases
But the tart odour of Orestes's sweat
Caught in the cold-lipped engine of his fear.

APOLLO

Then I ascend ; and leave you to your taste.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Then I descend ; and leave you to your task.

THE WATCHMAN

And I go out ; and leave you for a drink.

ORESTES

And so you have me ! Let me see your worst !
What puppet shows with bang-pate skeletons
And red-nosed revenants hiccupping curses ?

THE FURIES

We have few properties. Here is the worst.

ORESTES

A mirror! Very unpleasant I admit.
I have a morning-afterish aspect.
Is this a symbol?

THE FURIES

No, a gentle hint.
And now good-bye. We need not hang around you
Now that you are alone. We have no secrets
But when you've company, hearing the cars
And voices, we slide down the banisters
And grimace at the guests.

ORESTES

Infant terrors!

THE FURIES

Something of the sort. But now the party's over
Leaving you alone among the bits
We sneak upstairs again and into bed—
Not but that later, in the chilly morn
You may not hear us chuckling in the attic
And speculate what tricks you will discover
When you get up—perhaps a headless cat
Or an under-footman with his eyes gouged out.

ORESTES

You're right. I see we understand each other well.

THE FURIES

Too well! And if you'll unbutton your waistcoat
Into your breast we'll vanish like a smoke.

ORESTES

There's something quite maternal in the gesture . . .

THE FURIES

And rightly! Dieting at your hairy bosom
We've hung like bats, swelling and dropping off
With muffled thuds, sharp-tempered from sour wind
Or knelt and made our trustful orisons:
'Blessed be the brain that bore us and the complex
That gave us suck!'

ORESTES

Here, changelings! Ah, they've gone.
And I'm alone, while at my ankle hangs
The scabbed and rusty world to chafe my steps.
God helped my grandpapa whose birth-stained clothes
Were whitened in the laundry of the Church
But no push-button God will bleach for me
The crime I never did except in sleep.
I am guilty of that resortful city
Which rose to stately music from a sea
Of rippling flesh, splashed by divine saliva
And full of snub-nosed ministers of pleasure
Holding out hot right hands in amity;
Its tower of ivory on the low hills watching,
Where my young princess, turning in her sleep,
Blinked to affright the itch-foot butterfly
Whose colour yet well pleased her. Roses fall
From the black lunar space above in torrents
And whales, rolling idly in the thick perfume,
Chased by the shallow boats of fair-haired gods,
Tail-tossed them skywards like young meteors.
Here in the contemplative knowing air
I fly and guide, stroking the tinkling stars

To teach them geometry from my school books,
Strange books, old books, that give me equal power
To any calm-eyed and long-bearded wizard.
Here like a pulsing fountain Nightingale
Jets his gold music, in strong rhythmic floods.

Marble the city is and in the lake
An image hangs unmoving at its breast,
Image but lovelier, which to its own bosom
Imparts a bright reflection lovelier still;
Yet crime; all crime. The niggling decalogue
Of this outrageous and harsh blue-chinned world
Has sent its gross-booted detectives here
To pluck the sheets away and, thus exposed
To law's cold winds and words' corruptive spray
The rocket-slender turrets of the city
Have crumbled, fell on me and beat
Me with the cold resentful hands of bricks,
So I am bruised and broken and alone,
The Universe's delinquent, condemned
To jeers and uncompanionable vermin.

ELECTRA

You do sound sorry for yourself, old chap!

ORESTES

Thank God you've come, Electra! I've been mad!
The Furies—

ELECTRA

Why do you let them rattle you?
I never care what people say to me.
Poor father! But we did the proper thing
And he can rest in peace. And so can we.

ORESTES

I know, I know. It isn't really that.
I often ask myself, What does it matter
Murdered or not, mother or anyone?
And yet that's worse, for in the final push
There's nothing matters much, not even life
Which is as well, for if we half-believed
The agonies in which the days curl up
And burn, the constant sounds of suffering flesh,
We'd bang our skulls to pieces in despair.
But is it a put-up job? and in their earths
Do foxes, Christs, and hopeless criminals
Laugh, their cups clinking, how they fooled the world?

ELECTRA

There you see, when once you think it out
You needn't worry as I always said;
It's only liver or else indigestion.
If only you would fall for some nice girl!
But not too clever, that was father's ruin,
Cassandra with her knowing airs the bitch!
I've felt so happy since I've been engaged
And he's a dear: tall and as rich as father.
His people have been sweet, for since the trial
Though we got off, the papers made such fuss
The county aren't too keen on the Atridae.

ORESTES

Lucky for you you're so insensitive!

ELECTRA

Call it that if you like. I just don't care.
I say though, who's that standing in the corner?
I didn't notice him when I came in.

ORESTES

It looks to me like father.

AGAMEMNON

Yes, it is.

ELECTRA

Father! but you're dead.

AGAMEMNON

Yes, my girl, I'm dead.

You can't find anything deader than me.

ELECTRA

Then what are you doing here?

AGAMEMNON

You should know that

For I am you—the loose skin of your sorrow
Stuffed with your love. In hell I heard your call
And I was packed in flesh. They slammed the lid
And here I am.

ELECTRA

What is it like down there?

AGAMEMNON

Dreadful, Electra! You have no idea!
We float like water-lilies on the mud
Crammed grossly millions thick in death's black swamp,
Diseased and pale of flesh. The trampling sounds
Above us. How the battle does, if well
Or ill, we know not. Yet it was our fight
And we once fed the guns whose monstrous sighs
Now shake our leaves, and round the walls of Troy
We mined and countermined. The long years through
We rot and whisper, scandalize the living

And boast, and still though dead we grow
Higher and higher rankly like the hair
Which as you know sprouts on a corpse's chin.

ELECTRA

What can I do for you?

AGAMEMNON

Nothing but grieve.
The salt tears soaking through our slimy ceiling
Do not appease us but a shade who lacks them
Is much humiliated and despised.

ELECTRA

Then I shall mourn for ever.

AGAMEMNON

That's my child!
And wear black clothes and keep my tombstone clean!
Never forget your poor old father, dear.
Think of his cold bones in the swamp of death
Contemptuously mumbled by the rats.

ELECTRA

Never will I forget: never—Oh my God—

ORESTES

Electra, don't break down like that. Good Lord
We all must die. It doesn't worry me.
Let the dead rest in peace and us in peace.
They're dead and done with, and our job remains
How best support and use the boring years
Of necessary life, their horrors,
Their various duties and absurd seductions.

AGAMEMNON

How dare you speak of your old father thus, Sir!
Is this your modern talk, eh? I'm to rot
Unmourned for, perhaps thrown to the dogs even?
If not your father, at least respect old age.

ORESTES

I shall grow older than you probably
Before I die, and as for being my father
You're dead, you know, and have no legal status.

ELECTRA

I cannot bear the thought that those I love
Must die and moulder; all of them must die,
The man I love, the child I hope to bear.
I want the world safe for them like a bright toy.
If they must die, I want the whole world shaken
That it dare go on calmly while they rot.

ORESTES

Oh damn our family! Can't I comfort you
If you fear death, by pointing out that life
Is so disgusting, death is a release?

ELECTRA

You can't. I know it's wrong for I love life
And my heart hurts to think of all the dead
Lying there buried in the earth like stones.

AGAMEMNON

That's right my child! But now my time is up.
As I collapse, the blood with which you filled me
Will spurt upon the floor and shades will come,
My bedfellows, to snatch a brief existence
By paddling their frail ankles in the physic.

Goodbye, my child. Remember! *sans* relief
Eternal mourning and no truce with death!

THE SHADES

Can't you hear us calling
Child of life?
Isn't there a creepy-crawling
Memory, a dream appalling
Of a knife

And the painless operation
(Safe, they said)
Then the spluttering suffocation,
The weak heart's capitulation
To the dead?

Isn't there a mathematic
Of despair—
Life's expectation, the emphatic
Answer of insurance, static
Deaf to prayer?

Didn't Jones go, didn't Brown go,
Friends of yours?
Aren't you liverish?—that tomato
Face, blood-pressure, vertigo,
Failing powers!

Can't you hear us calling
Little friends?
Life's a rope and we are hauling
All of you despite your squalling
To your ends.

You lived, you see, upon our money,
Sons of ours,
Our capital; you thought it funny
Little bees, to suck the honey
From us flowers.

But we oppressed proletariat
Rise at last.
We ask, and whirl death's crippling lariat,
'What do you owe the commissariat
Of the past?'

Can't you hear us scheming
Children dear?
How to meet you when you're dreaming,
See you, kiss you, wake you screaming:
'I am here!'

Now we're dead you wear our breeches,
Use our bed,
Ride our mares and hunt our bitches,
Soil the name and spend the riches
Of the dead.

Can't you feel a nervous quiver
In the knee?
Or a burden on the liver?
Does your scalp begin to shiver?
It is we!

You inherited our sickness
With the rest.
It will damn your young eyes' quickness
And you'll feel the gathering thickness
In your breast.

Don't think we shall bear you malice
When you come.
There's no snobbery of palace,
Shame of birth or pride of phallus
In the tomb.

Here we lie and here we moulder
Down at heel,
Packed like sardines breast to shoulder,
Whores in finery and the soldier
Complete steel.

Here we wait the resurrection,
So they say.
We shall be a queer collection
Needing sorting and dissection
On the Day.

Never mind. It doesn't matter
To the dead.
We shall be too bored to chatter
When we hear the struck stars patter
Overhead.

You needn't really mind our joking.
Just a nip.
Though your pleasure is provoking
You won't wake to find you're choking
In our grip

For when one's dead one's hate is powerless
Like one's lust.
Hope's absurd. One's time is hourless
One's good intentions thrust up flowerless
From the dust.

Can't you hear us calling
Child! Ahoy!
In the sunlight shadows falling,
In the darkness parents bawling,
Sunny Boy?

ELECTRA

Stop, stop ! I cannot stand that ghastly noise
Of the dead crooning like a gramophone.
Always in dream they used to come to me
With something tragic in their anguish. These—
Have you no dignity in your despair?

THE SHADES

What, Miss? You watch us die ! Our glazed eyes popping
And fingers scrabbling while we gobble breath.
See our dead faces like preposterous clowns
Purple and staring and the dignified
Finish in which our fleshly garb is stripped
By earth's rank humours and the faceless worms !

ORESTES

I recognize your voices ! You're not shades.
You are the Furies come back to torment us.

THE SHADES

Furies or phantoms, it is all the same.
Your fathers or your conscience or your Gods
Or your heredity, we are the same
Disgusting flies from ancient sinews bred.

ORESTES

And you that made the same mistake as we
Have you no comfort equal to our hopes?
Can you not show us progress or delight?

THE SHADES

Not us wise shades ! Like you we dreamed those dreams
And bit the dust. We're dead. It's the past's job
Always to herd your sort down the same cliffs
To the detested sea ; and boulders roll

And whips we use, poor swine ! We lack the art
To lead you on with sweet discourse of pipes.
But it is open to you, if you wish
To look up to the boughs and hear—

THE NIGHTINGALES

Sit down. The grey-flanked evening
Browses. In the meadows
The kine look for the herdsman
And to the field of heaven
The cattle of the gods
Are led by Hesperus.
Many a schooner heels
Puffed by the grateful wind
That runs it into harbour ;
Many a worker pauses,
Puts by his ledger, climbs
Down from his stool and homeward.
Rest and the pleasant voices
Of comrades flower round us.
It is time for drinking ;
And in the dusty parks
We lie among the papers
And kiss, or rolling back
Look up to see the radiance
Of the eternal stars
And the advertisements.
Soon winter comes, the snow
Like angels' tears of pity
Cold and superfluous
Falling, a sheet of splendour
Yet at the touch of traffic
Dissolving into slime.
Go, if you will and play,
Or talk to an equal friend
Or sit in the deepening twilight

And hear our music tell
The agonies of Gods
Or quiet loves of mortals.

ORESTES

Nice birds ! But look, they've gone.

THE SHADES

Of course they've gone.
We scared them. Do you think we should wait round
Forever, while you stood there, pink snout dribbling
Hoof lifted, wrapped in piggy ecstasy?
Come, you've had your stand-easy, swine. Move on !

ORESTES

And if I won't be driven? Squat plump down
In spite of all your stones and shouts to budge me?

THE SHADES

Some beasts do ! Earth is littered with their bones
And if men like to, let them, we don't care.
For there are other pigs—pr'aps better pork.
But while you'll march we'll stick to you.

ORESTES

And we
Shall suffer always. . . . Is there no escape?
Must I for ever stand here cap in hand
And see poor virtue forced and hope a joke
And set my hand to warfare?

THE SHADES

Don't ask us.
Ask the all-blessed comfortable Gods.
The Gods may hear you if the Gods exist
And if they hear may tell you, if they know.

ORESTES

Then let us ask. Electra, lift your hands
To the all-blessed comfortable gods
As we were wont to do at mother's knee.

ELECTRA

Yes I remember. Then we were but babes.
Later though mother used the self-same gesture
Kneeling to us. But we held the knife firm.

THE SHADES

(A touching trick learned from Euripides!)

ELECTRA

And look! In the machine descending
A deity! She shakes her thunderous aegis
And knits her virgin brow. It's our own goddess
Athene, daughter of Zeus and Wisdom's patron.

THE SHADES

I fear your eyesight's going. It's no goddess
It's only Tape returning. His doctor's hood
You call his aegis, trimmed with rabbit fur.

ORESTES

Now he comes nearer I will swear it's neither
But mother's paramour, the man Aegisthos.

ATHENE

All three are right. For as you know the gods
May shape themselves as men or beasts or women
And though no myth recounts my avatar
Yet I, Athene, was your mother's lover
Sampling with caution the delights of passion

And taking care never to get involved
Till finally, bored by love's tedium
Went and got killed or something. I forget.

These modern days the Gods must earn their bread.
Zeus as you know supports the toppling throne,
Without him the poor Empire would collapse
And Communists would rape our duchesses.
Venus at Hollywood doles out to stars
Their sex-appeal. Apollo, Lord of Jazz,
Sets our hams twitching, and I, Queen of Science,
Look after armaments and moral health
That philosophic savant, Dr. Tape.

But as for you, you shades or Furies, go!
You're merely inhibited tendencies
And now I've analysed you, quick, avaunt!
You see? They've gone. Do what you want to do.
The God works in you then, and up and on
The Vital Force will press you. We evolve
To higher things and higher. God never is
Nor was but always will be. Alexander
Explains it. I can't stop to quote at length
But you must understand that values
Are all conserved and every good you do
Lives on. Evil of course is necessary
So shut your eyes and swallow like a pill.
Each day we learn some more. New tricks, new trades
Despite Bergsonians, those Judases
We shall march on hope-flushed with rolling drums.
Now when you're dead, you're dead. The good you did
Lives after you. If you ask more of life
You're greedy.

But, Electra, where are you going?
Without answering me she rushes out!
A goddess I foresee her end. The type

Hysteric with a bad Electra complex!
There! as I guessed, she's run straight to the Thames
And in she goes! A while her gold head bobs
What time she sings some dubious shepherd song
Buoyed by her garments. Round her neck depend
Dahlias and orchids wreathed. But now she sinks
Twice, then for ever. Drowns. Police come. Too late!

Orestes stays, being more curious.
Sit down, Orestes, or I'll lose my thread
If you keep hopping up and down. There's nothing
To worry about. You have your growing pains
Natural in adolescence. Never mind,
You will feel better when you are a man.
Meanwhile don't crush your instincts, whether sex
Or fear. But of course if you must, you must.
We don't ask you to do anything wrong.
Not that we mind but it recoils on you.

God bless my soul, he's gone! A hopeless fellow.
Undoubtedly a paranoid or worse.
There he goes rushing madly through the traffic
And now he's down. The tank he's fallen against
Glides over him impassive. Now he's dead.
The Furies were in ambush. Rank bad taste
And dead against the rules. But they're no sportsmen.

Well, I had quite a lot more still to say
But it seems pointless to an empty house.
So I ascend, the tragedy resolved
By timely intervention of my godhead.

THE END

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